

BALLARAT FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB
NEWS SHEET - NO. 8. DECEMBER, 1974.

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EXCURSION: Spargo Creek Forest. 8th December, 1974.

Leave Crookers at 1.30 p.m. and visit places of interest in the Spargo Creek area. There are several plants and birds in this district not found much closer to Ballarat. Watch out for red-browed tree-creepers, pied currawongs and olive whistlers. Excellent specimens of candlebark gum and messmate occur here. An animal found in this area, at the western extremity of its range, is the greater glider, and members are invited to take their evening meal and later search for these gliders with the aid of spotlights.

TONIGHT: Mr. Alan Sonsee was to have spoken to us on "Eucalypts", but he has recently left hospital and so is unavailable. We all hope he is recovering well and will soon be back to normal. The film "The Living Forest", produced by the Forests Commission and reviewed in our September News Sheet, will be shown. Some time will be spent discussing our local Eucalypts, of which there are 18 or more different species.

MALLEE SUBMISSION: Congratulations to Wally Coles, Greg Binns and Chris Bunn on the preparation of a submission on the Mallee area to the Land Conservation Council. A copy will be available for inspection tonight and members will agree that it is a job well done.

LAKE WENDOUREE: Members will have noticed several press articles and letters about proposed water skiing practice on Lake Wendouree prior to the Begonia Festival. Our Club was part of a deputation of citizens to the Ballarat City Council on 4th November when our case was put by Mr. Jack Wheeler who travelled from Geelong to be present. Other speakers were Mrs. L. Pescott, on behalf of the National Trust, and Mr. Jim Thomas who spoke on behalf of fishing groups. The final decision of the Council, as to whether or not the skiing will be allowed again in 1975, may be announced before our meeting, but it is possible that a decision may not be reached for a few more weeks.

W.V.F.N.C.A. at Portland: At the Annual Meeting of the Western Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association held on 26th October, Mr. Jack Wheeler was elected President and Mr. Roger Thomas as Secretary. The weekend was most enjoyable, with members from 13 of the 18 affiliated Clubs being represented at the meeting. The camp-site was alongside the Mt. Richmond National Park where a beautiful display of wildflowers was greatly admired. Interesting outings were arranged for the visitors by the Portland F.N.C. The meeting was attended by about 200 people who heard Dr. Jim Willis speak on his recent trip to Central Australia.

NEXT MEETING: This will be on 7th February, 1975. Please bring your friends to hear Dr. Jim Willis speak. His topic will probably be "A Beautiful Expedition to the Centre, Kimberleys and Hammersley Ranges", the talk he gave recently at Portland. The venue for this meeting will be announced tonight, and it is expected that there will be no business, etc dealt with on that night.

BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB: Several members participated in the B.O.C. visit to Mt. Beckworth on 26th October, and the Club had a successful day there. On 7th & 8th December, the B.O.C. is conducting a junior members' camp-out at Linton and so some of our members may be absent from the Spargo Creek excursion, as they will be assisting the "Birdoes".

NOVEMBER EXCURSION: The members who visited the Trawalla bush, Waterloo and Stoneleigh areas found much of interest at each point, with 74 species of birds and more than 90 plants being listed. The first stop was at the Trawalla Bush, where we met our leader for the day, Mr. Ivan Tiley, and Cr. and Mrs. Chris Hedges and family of Stoneleigh. We were shown nests of the scarlet robin, white-browed scrub-wren and striated thornbill, and saw and heard other birds such as satin flycatcher, olive-backed oriole, buff-tailed thornbill and mistletoe-bird. While walking down a shallow gully, a koala was sighted, and was found to be carrying a large baby. The adult was a very light-coloured specimen and they were high up in a stringy bark tree. Wildflowers were colourful and very prevalent, especially pink-bells, gold-dust wattle, gorse bitter-pea, narrow-leaf bitter-pea, matted bush-pea, candles and peach heath. Others adding colour to the bushland were blue squill, bulbine lily, millmaids, rabbit-ears, wallflower orchid, pink fingers, musky caladenia, waxlip, yam daisy, common beard-heath, showy parrot-pea and a bright red-and-yellow form of goldfields grevillea. Correa was common, but not in flower.

After leaving Trawalla, members travelled through Beaufort to near the Musical Gully Reservoir where a grey fantail was observed building its nest. Other birds recorded here were olive-backed oriole, rufous whistler, pallid cuckoo and fuscous honeyeater.

A type of wattle was heavy in bloom, and strongly scented. After conferring with Mrs. Betty Millar later in the day, it was identified as the inland form of the wirilda.

From there we moved to Waterloo bushland to have lunch, and at this point were joined by Mr. & Mrs. Laurie Millar. We were shown a type of parrot-pea (*Dillwynia*), but could not arrive at its positive identification. During the day, several species of pea-flowers were seen, and the children present were interested to learn that there were 7 species of "eggs-and-bacon" in bloom. After lunch we were shown the un-named *Grevillea* species which was in flower, being an olive-bronze colour, unlike the other reddish un-named species found at the Glut, in the Mt. Cole forest. Both varieties are of the holly-leaf group of *Grevilleas*. Three species of violets were seen, - the showy, tiny and ivy-leaved violets - and all were blooming. Other interesting plants in the Waterloo area were salmon sun-orchid, leopard orchid, nodding greenhood, bird-orchid, climbing sundew and dwarf boronia. A few more birds were added to the list and willie wagtails, orioles and satin flycatchers were nesting.

From Waterloo, we travelled through Beaufort and left the bushland behind as we entered the western plains, on the way to Stoneleigh. En route we stopped to see two interesting trees, the first a type of she-oak (identification uncertain) and the second a small candlebark gum on which the trunk had forked and later joined again, leaving a hole about the size of a football in the trunk.

At Stoneleigh we were shown around the property by Cr. Chris Hedges and his family. Members were particularly impressed with the waterfowl habitat constructed around the property. There were two main lakes, both quite deep and lined with trees. Several waterbirds were added to the list here and included reed warbler (nesting), cormorants, coots, white-eyed ducks, musk ducks, little grass-birds and golden-headed fantail-warbler. After inspecting one lake we went across the paddocks and saw many interesting species of plants native to the western plains. Leek orchids (probably the tawny leek-orchid) were very common, as well as the golden moths orchids, and tall sundews. Billy-buttons and excellent specimens ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch across) of fairies aprons were found in the damper areas. While some members tried to identify the plants, others were more interested in watching straw-necked ibis, banded plovers and brolgas.

As the next stop we inspected the other large lake and were amazed to observe more than 70 nankeen night-herons, which we disturbed from the lakeside trees. About 80% of these were birds in immature plumage. As well as the sight of the night-herons, bird watchers found much more of interest including nesting little pied cormorants, black duck and ducklings, white ibis and white-necked heron.

Before leaving, our eyesight was tested by hunting for a pair of frogmouths and their large chick sitting in a pine tree near the homestead and most were successful in finding the birds.

The Club would like to thank Mr. Tiley for arranging the excursion (and the nesting birds!) which was thoroughly enjoyed by all present. We also wish to sincerely thank Cr. Hedges for permission to visit Stoneleigh and for showing us over the property, and trust he and his family enjoyed their time with us. Ivan must also be thanked regarding Stoneleigh, as it was a very practical follow-up excursion to our "Farm Lakes" meeting two days before.

LIST OF BIRDS SEEN ON THE EXCURSION - 3.11.74.

Dusky Moorhen, Coot, Black Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant, Spur-winged Plover,
Brolga, Straw-necked Ibis, White Ibis, White-faced Heron, White-necked Heron,
Nankeen Night-heron, Black Swan, Mountain Duck, Black Duck, Grey Teal,
White-eyed Duck, Musk Duck, Australian Goshawk, Brown Hawk, Galah,
Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Tawny Frogmouth, Kookaburra, Pallid Cuckoo,
Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Golden Bronze-Cuckoo, Welcome Swallow, Grey Fantail,
Banded Plover, Willie Wagtail, Rest-less Flycatcher, Satin Flycatcher,
Scarlet Robin, Yellow Robin, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Thrush,
Magpie-lark, Shrike-tit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Little Cuckoo-shrike,
Blackbird, White-fronted Chat, Striated Thornbill, Brown Thornbill,
Buff-tailed Thornbill, White-browed Scrub-wren, Reed Warbler, Little Grassbird,
Golden-headed Fantail-warbler, Blue Wren, White-throated Tree-creeper,
Mistletoe-bird, Spotted Pardalote, Eastern Striated Pardalote,
White-naped Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, White-eared Honeyeater,
Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird, Pipit, Skylark,
Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Olive-backed Oriole, Starling, Little Raven,
White-winged Chough, Grey Currawong, White-backed Magpie.